

Meritorious Service Award for Fire Lieutenant Brian Ettinger

Commissioner Shuham recently contacted the Hollywood Fire Rescue and Beach Safety Department regarding a large drifting buoy located offshore near McKinley Street. This buoy presented a potential hazard to boaters and the marine environment. Prior to Commissioner Shuham's notification, Beach Safety Chief Joyce Furhman and her staff had made attempts to remove the buoy. However, due to its substantial size and weight, along with challenges in identifying responsible parties, their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. In addition, despite outreach to multiple agencies, no organization initially took responsibility for resolving the issue.

Our Business Compliance Manager, April Allen, took it upon herself to reignite efforts to address this concern. Through her persistence, she identified the appropriate contacts and ultimately coordinated with Lieutenant Brian Ettinger. On November 21, 2024, Lt Ettinger coordinated a joint operation between Nova Southeastern University, Hollywood Police Department Marine Unit, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to remove the large drifting buoy. Lt Ettinger, along with another diver, assessed the seafloor and ruled out the presence of coral or hard bottom at that location and collected video documentation of the area for the DEP report. The buoy had approximately 50 ft of heavy anchor chain extending from the bottom of the buoy indicating a possibility of damage to coral or hard bottom in up to 50 feet water depth along the path of the buoy. The chain showed enough damage from extreme rusting and deteriorating to break under heavy stress such as high winds, rough seas, strong currents, or a vessel strike. The divers removed the chain from the seafloor using lift bags, and with the assistance of the HPD Marine Unit, were able to secure and establish tow of the buoy. The officer in charge at United States Coast Guard (USCG) Station Ft. Lauderdale was contacted and they agreed to receive the buoy. The field operations team arrived at the USCG Station at about 1900 and on shift personnel were able to transfer custody of the buoy to the station.